

Executive Officer's Statement
California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board

January 20, 2005

Looking Ahead to 2005

In 2005 the California Victim Compensation Program (Program) will mark its 40th anniversary. The California Program is the oldest in the nation. This anniversary will give the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board (Board) a chance both to look back at the great strides made since 1965 in helping victims and to look forward to the future.

April 10 – 16, 2005 is the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. The theme, "Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are," coincides with the Program's major goals for the next year. In 2005, the Program will concentrate on outreach efforts – getting the word out that the Restitution fund is secure and is here to assist crime victims who need help in the aftermath of violent crime. The Program will do that by building and rebuilding our partnerships with law enforcement, prosecutors, victim advocates and other victim service providers. Early this year the Program will invite those partners to assist us as members of an advisory committee. The new advisory committee will be able to provide feedback about how well the Program serves victims and help generate ideas for outreach.

In 2005 the Program will also look at ways to implement the recommendations made by the California Performance Review to increase the efficiency of the payment process. The Program will also continue to develop the new technology to bring its business process into the 21st century and improve its ability to serve crime victims and build on the progress made in 2004.

The Board is proud of its many accomplishments in 2004, which include:

- The award of more than \$67 million to crime victims in Fiscal Year 2003-04. The top five categories of disbursement were:

- \$21 million in medical, dental and medical-related expenses
 - \$19.8 million in mental health expenses
 - \$14.2 million in income-support loss expenses
 - \$8.5 million in funeral-burial expenses
 - \$3 million in relocation expenses

- A decision by the three-member Board to raise medical and dental reimbursement rates at its August 2004 meeting. The new rates are in effect for any bill submitted for service on or after July 1, 2004.
- Establishment of a successful partnership with the California Department of Corrections (CDC) and the Franchise Tax Board's (FTB) Court-Ordered Debt Collection Program. The Board worked with CDC and FTB to establish a process to collect outstanding restitution obligations from post-parolees and probationers. The effort resulted in an additional \$2 million to the Restitution Fund within the first year of the program.
- The Board's continued commitment to assist those affected by the September 11 terrorist attacks. The Board's \$2.3 million federal grant, originally set to expire in December 2003, was extended to December 2004, allowing the Board to continue regional support group sessions

for survivors and families, hold additional statewide meetings, and continue mental health benefits for eligible victims.

- The development of a new Claims Management and Information System in an effort to streamline and speed up the processing of victims' claims. The project continues to move forward, and it is scheduled to come on line in 2005.
- The work of the Board's Customer Service Unit's agents who fielded an average of 12,729 calls per month during FY 2003-04. The average amount of time a caller spent on hold, if necessary, before talking to an agent was well below two minutes. The call agents fielded calls from service providers, victims, victims' representatives and the public and responded to inquiries on everything from the status of a bill to requests for applications to the Victim Compensation Program.
- The continued funding of a demonstration project in partnership with the University of California, San Francisco Trauma Recovery Center (Center) at San Francisco General Hospital. The Center received the 2004 Safety Net National Award for Patient Services. The San Francisco Victim Witness Office also presented an award to the Center on April 21, 2004 for the impact they have had on patient services.
- The Board's continued participation on the Judicial Council's Working Group on Enhanced Collections, which has met since November 2003 to develop comprehensive guidelines for collecting unpaid fees, fines, forfeitures, penalties, and assessments.
- The Board's important role in helping to organize the 30th Anniversary of the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) conference, which took place in August 2004 in Sacramento. Board staff actively participated on panel discussions during the conference.
- The Board's participation in Attorney General Bill Lockyer's statewide task force to study how effectively criminal justice agencies deal with domestic violence.
- Making the Board's Government Claims Program self-sufficient with new legislation mandating initiation of new fees and surcharges. As of August 17, 2004, a \$25 filing fee is required for all claims submitted, and a 15 percent surcharge is assessed upon all approved claims.

While the Board made important strides in 2004, it looks ahead to another year of great work and accomplishments and continued service to all Californians.

The San Diego Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment

Victim Compensation Program (Program) staff will attend the San Diego Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment January 24 through 28, 2005. This 19th Annual Conference is one of the largest of its type and attracts expert presenters from all over the world. This year's conference is expected to draw more than 1,200 attendees. The workshops are of a very high quality, and opportunities to network with a full range of professionals are excellent.

Program staff will host an information and outreach booth in the exhibitor's hall. In past years, this has been an excellent opportunity to communicate with California's mental health providers and social service and law enforcement representatives about Program updates, changes and general program orientation.

Revenue Recovery Staff Active in Outreach and Training

Revenue Recovery staff presented a training for 22 new deputy district attorneys and other staff members from the Stanislaus County District Attorney's Office. The two-hour session included an overview of the Program, the importance of restitution to the Program, collections at the local and state level, victims' remedies and resources for collecting restitution, and an update on changes in

restitution law. Revenue Recovery staff will return to Stanislaus County to train probation officers in the near future.

Board staff will attend the California District Attorney's Association (CDAA) Winter Workshop in Southern California on January 25. The Chair of the Victims' Rights Committee (Committee), Napa County District Attorney Gary Lieberstein, invited the Board's Executive Officer and Deputy Executive Officer, Revenue Recovery and Accounting Division to participate. Board staff will advise the Committee of issues of concern to help improve response and services in the victims' rights area.

Board Staff Makes Significant Contribution to Statewide Food Drive

The State Employee Canned Food Drive Committee's 2004 food drive at the Board was a great success. Board staff contributed a total of 6,748 pounds of food, almost doubling last year's contribution and far surpassing the goal of 4,001 pounds. Activities supporting the drive included a bake sale, a silent auction, a raffle, and aluminum can recycling. Money donated to the drive was converted into pounds of food to calculate the grand total.